DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 984 RC 022 076

AUTHOR	Kremers, Carolyn
TITLE	Place of the Pretend People: Gifts from a Yup'ik Eskimo Village.
ISBN	ISBN-0-88240-478-4
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	240p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Alaska Northwest Books, P.O. Box 10306, Portland, OR 97210; Tel: 800-452-3032 (Toll Free) ($22.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Alaska Natives; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Maintenance; Culturally Relevant Education; *Eskimos; Geographic Isolation; Oral Tradition; Personal Narratives; Rural Schools; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Experience; World Views; Yupik
IDENTIFIERS	Alaska; *Eskimo Culture; Sense of Place; Teacher Community Relationship; *Yupik Eskimos

ABSTRACT

In 1986, Colorado native Carolyn Kremers accepted an invitation to teach music and English at a school in Tununak, a remote Yup'ik Eskimo village on Nelson Island, Alaska. This memoir recounts her experiences as a teacher, and also her reflections on music, the outdoors, teaching, Alaska, and how she came to understand Yup'ik and Inupiat Eskimo culture and social traditions. Her reflections on the similarities between the 85-student school in Tununak and the 2,000-student school in inner-city Chicago, where she had previously taught, offer a penetrating look at American education. The dominant culture feeds non-white students with white teachers, white values, and white goals, resulting in time wasted, and spontaneity and creative energy snuffed out. Yet, some students learn, some interests are sparked, and some opportunities are provided that otherwise would not have been. One chapter is named "I Hate Schools," but it concludes with Carolyn's confession that she loves to teach. Similar counterpoints are woven throughout the book as she describes her developing understanding of Eskimo culture and worldview, friendships and other relationships, and eventual acceptance by the townspeople. Nineteen related readings are listed. (TD)

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